Congress of the United States
Committee on Foreign Affairs
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

November 27, 1979

Mr. Richard Lehman
National Intelligence Officer
for Warning
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D.C. 20505

Dear Mr. Lehman:

The Subcommittee on International Security and Scientific Affairs will be holding a series of four hearings between January 31 and February 12, 1980 examining the role of intelligence in the foreign policy process. Attached is a copy of an outline of the proposed hearings as well as a statement of purpose of the hearings.

As Chairman of the Subcommittee on International Security and Scientific Affairs, I am writing to invite you to testify on Thursday, February 7, 1980 at 10:00 AM in Room 2200 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The hearing at which you would be testifying is on the foreign policy process; role of intelligence in crisis management. The attached outline will give you the theme for that particular hearing.

Enclosed is an instruction sheet for witnesses which explains the procedures for submission of testimony and other pertinent information. If you have any questions please feel free to contact Mr. Ivo Spalatin, staff director of the subcommittee, on 225-8926.

With the hope that you will be able to testify, I am

Sincerely yours,

Clement J. Zablocki
Chairman

enclosures

November 30, 1979

Committee on Foreign Affairs

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

AND SCIENTIFIC AFFAIRS

THE ROLE OF INTELLIGENCE IN THE FOREIGN POLICY PROCESS

OUTLINE OF HEARINGS

I. INTRODUCTION

Thursday, January 31, 1980

Basic Themes & Questions:

Establish purpose of hearing: clarify role of intelligence in the foreign policy process.
Definition of intelligence.
Proper role and realistic expectations of the fulfillment of this role: What can and should it do? What can and should it not do? At what stage does it fit into the policy-making process?
Problem of policy sensitivity and the intelligence process: What is the relationship between policy preferences/objectives and intelligence?

Witnesses:*

Ray S. Cline: Director of Studies, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown; former Director of Intelligence, CIA; former Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, State Department

Samuel P. Huntington: Professor of Government, Harvard; former Coordinator of Security Planning, National Security Council

Lyman B. Kirkpatrick, Jr.: Professor of Political Science, Brown University; former Executive-Director-Comptroller and Inspector General, CIA

* Appearances subject to confirmation by witnesses

II. THE INTELLIGENCE PRODUCT

Tuesday, February 5, 1980

Basic Themes & Questions: Brief examination of the current intelligence community structure, with emphasis on coordination and production, especially the new community-wide organizations, functions, and the effect upon the foreign policy process.

Steps in intelligence production: questions of authority, timeliness, duplication, coordination, and dissemination within the foreign policy apparatus.

Witnesses*: Admiral Stansfield Turner: Director, Central Intelligence Agency

William Bowdler: Director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State

Lt. Gen. Eugene F. Tighe, Jr., USAF: Director, Defense Intelligence Agency

Bruce C. Clarke: Director of the National Foreign Assessment Center (NFAC)

* Appearances subject to confirmation by witnesses

III. THE FOREIGN POLICY PROCESS: ROLE OF INTELLIGENCE IN (A) LONG-TERM PLANNING AND GOALS; AND (B) CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Thursday, February 7, 1980

Basic Themes & Questions:

(A)

How the intelligence product fits and serves in the formulation and attainment of long-range policy goals.

Nature of the long-term policy process.

Effect of policy preferences on the production of finished intelligence.

Discussion of the national intelligence estimate process and its integration into the foreign policy process.

Witnesses*:

Philip C. Habib: Senior Adviser to the Secretary, Department of State

Anthony Lake: Director, Policy Planning Staff, Department of State

Basic Themes & Questions:

(B)

Role of intelligence product and unexpected foreign policy problems.

Differences between this product and the long-term estimate, in terms of the ability of the intelligence community to meet the demands of the foreign policy formulators.

What role can the intelligence product play in being a predictor of impending foreign policy crises?

Witnesses*:

Richard Lehman: CIA National Intelligence Officer (NIO) for Warning

William Hyland: formerly with Office of National Estimates, NSC; former Director of INR, State Department; former Deputy Director, NSC; former Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

* Appearances subject to confirmation by witnesses

IV. ROLE OF CONGRESS

Tuesday, February 12, 1980

Basic Themes & Questions: What is and should be the role of Congress:
As a consumer: how much intelligence and from what departments or agencies?

As an overseer: what degree of involvement in evaluating the intelligence product and the role intelligence plays in the foreign policy process?

Witnesses:* Senator Bayh: Chairman, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence

Rep. Boland: Chairman, House Select Committee on Intelligence

Admiral Stansfield Turner: Director, Central Intelligence Agency

Sen. Goldwater: Ranking Minority Member, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence

Rep. Robinson: Ranking Minority Member, House Select Committee on Intelligence

John M. Maury: former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs; former Legislative Counsel, CIA

Robert Bork: Kent Professor of Law, Yale University; former Solicitor General of the U.S.

* Appearances subject to confirmation by witnesses

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE HEARINGS ON THE ROLE
OF INTELLIGENCE IN THE FOREIGN POLICY PROCESS

Since the end of World War II, intelligence gathering and production has grown to become a major part of our Government's activities in terms of manpower usage and financial expenditures. Literally thousands of people and billions of dollars are involved in supplying intelligence to our foreign policymakers. The finished intelligence products -- current intelligence reports, basic research, national estimates, and special studies -- influence a wide variety of foreign policies that affect the level of defense spending; the potential for arms control agreements; and the confidence with which we can contribute to our national security and that of our allies.

Accordingly, while everyone agrees that the preservation of our country's national security necessitates the existence of an intelligence community to provide timely and accurate intelligence to our foreign policy decisionmakers, there is less concurrence as to how this effort should be organized and what the role of intelligence should be in the foreign policy process.

It is this last point which will be the focus of a set of hearings by the committee's Subcommittee on International Security and Scientific Affairs. The intent is first and foremost improved understanding -- to make sure that the role of intelligence is relevant and complimentary to the development and implementation of U.S. foreign policies now and especially in the future. It is set in the backdrop of a recognition of the growing complexity of U.S. foreign policy and the corresponding new demands placed on the intelligence community -- both of which must operate in a rapidly changing and increasingly interdependent world.

In fulfilling this objective, the proposed hearings are structured along the following lines:

(1) Definition of intelligence and description of its role in the foreign policy process.

(2) Description of current intelligence community structure; its organizational makeup, its process, and its steps in intelligence production;

(3) Description of how the intelligence community is integrated into long-term foreign policy goals and plans and into foreign policy crisis management requirements;

(4) The congressional role in intelligence activities as it relates to the foreign policy process.

Each of these four hearings will involve witnesses from within and/or outside Government whose experience and expertise in the area of intelligence and foreign policy is well established.

Together with members, the witnesses will be invited to engage in an open dialogue with emphasis on informal discussion and seminar-type exchanges.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR WITNESSES

Witnesses are asked to keep their oral presentations to no more than ten minutes. This will allow adequate time for questions by members of the subcommittee. Your prepared statement may be as long as you wish and in the event that your prepared statement is too long to be read, the entire text will be included in the hearing record when it is printed. When you begin to testify please indicate to the Chairman whether you are reading your prepared statement or summarizing it. Together with members, the witnesses will be invited to engage in an open dialogue with emphasis on informal discussion and seminar-type exchanges.

We will need at least 20 copies of your prepared statement for use by the members and staff 48 hours in advance of your testimony. These should be sent to the Subcommittee on International Security and Scientific Affairs, Room B301B Rayburn Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. If you wish your statement to be distributed to the press and the public we will need a total of 75 copies since it will not be possible for the staff to duplicate witnesses' statements. You may bring the additional copies of your statement directly to the hearing room prior to commencement of the hearing.

We ask that you limit any additional material which you submit for the record due the high cost of printing. We cannot guarantee that all additional material will be included in the hearing record. We ask that you have with you any additional material which you want to submit, rather than sending it at a later date. This should be given to the subcommittee staff.

Your prepared statement should display a hearing which includes: your name, title, organization, date of testimony and the subcommittee before which you are appearing, i.e.:

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL SECURITY
AND SCIENTIFIC AFFAIRS

Each witness will receive a copy (or part) of the hearing transcript soon after it is obtained from the reporters (usually within two weeks). Witnesses should edit their own remarks only, without changing basic meaning or context. Edited and revised manuscripts should be returned to the subcommittee as quickly as possible to permit timely publication.

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact the staff of the subcommittee at (202) 225-8926.

Next 9 Page(s) In Document Denied

INTELLIGENCE AND POLICY

Statement

by

Richard K. Betts

Research Associate

The Brookings Institution*

to

The Subcommittee on International Security

and Scientific Affairs of the Committee on

Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives

on

January 28, 1980

*Opinions in this statement are those of

the author alone, and should not be

attributed to the Brookings Institution.

Intelligence is more important to the United States than ever before. In earlier years we were rich and strong enough that mistakes due to ignorance or misjudgment were more affordable. Although the decline in American power has been overemphasized in recent debate, sometimes hysterically, the decline is real. The United States no longer controls the international economy to the extent it did in the first quarter century after World War II, and our energy security is precarious. The Soviet Union is no longer seen as militarily inferior or vulnerable to pressure by U.S. "rocket-rattling," and its objectives once again appear increasingly threatening. With the last shreds of detente going up in smoke, the United States could be entering a period where tension is as great as it was in the 1950s and '60s but the old cushion of apparently overwhelming American material predominance is gone. Important as it always was, it is now even more vital that American leaders understand the nature of challenges in the international arena and know the full implications of their own policy initiatives and reactions.

Yet the increased importance of intelligence has not been matched by increased understanding of what it is or how it can and should be used to improve government decisions. Confusion is least where the problem is, with some exceptions, also the least: collection of raw information. Confusion is greatest where the problems are trickier, impossible to fix by changes in resource allocation or organizational procedure, and infected by controversy: analytic interpretation and projections of foreign military and political developments.

Expectations, Types, and Timing of Intelligence

Policymakers often complain about failures of the intelligence community to give them information that is timely or relevant to the nature of their responsibilities, but they rarely realize that they themselves are a big part of the problem. Henry Kissinger is reported to have said once, "I don't know what kind of intelligence I want, but I know it when I get it." And when authorities are more communicative about their needs, intelligence professionals frequently feel they ask the wrong questions. Officials also often prefer to get "hard facts," rather than extensive analytical interpretations, feeling they are better equipped to make their own assessments.

In some ways, and at some times, they indeed are better equipped. They are usually more politically experienced than professional analysts, and more in touch with high-level activity and day-to-day developments in negotiations both external (with foreign governments) and internal (between various U.S. agencies and committees). As generalists, if they are competent, policymakers can make better sense of the relationships between pieces of data in widely different subject areas. But also because they are generalists, they are less sensitive to the particularities, intricacies, and ambiguities of specific problems than are the intelligence specialists. Raw data means nothing out of context, and while leaders may understand the context of the big picture they are less likely to grasp the context of the little picture. Hard facts without interpretation by specialists thus may lead high-level decision-makers astray; highly general interpretations by specialized analysts about issues that cut across subject boundaries may strike decision-makers as either obvious or naive.

The kind of intelligence that is most frequently likely to be useful, therefore, lies in the middle-range: analyses of specific problems that marshall recent information acquired through multiple channels, link it with relevant data from the past, outline the range of possible implications, and estimate probabilities without attempting to state definitive or sweeping conclusions. When isolated facts are so clear that they speak for themselves, there is no real job for intelligence, but only the job of transmitting those facts. When the facts are totally uncertain, at the other extreme, they are meaningless, and the intelligence job is impossible. To be useful, intelligence analyses must be those that do, simply and literally, inform decision-makers.

In this sense logic implies that intelligence should precede the decision process, that estimators turn out their products in written form, and then officials read and use them. In the real world of international politics, though, apart from long-range analyses of problems that have not yet become critical, the division of labor can rarely be so logically neat and discrete. Especially in crises or on rapidly developing issues, the formal process of producing National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) is too slow, and useful contributions from intelligence may have to come in the form of quick memos. Complicated and pressing issues are never frozen in time. The information available, the significance or meaning of the information, the process of policy choice, change, implementation, and adaptation are all constantly in flux, feeding into and altering each other. Estimates themselves can be self-fulfilling or self-negating prophesies, by prompting leaders to take actions which change the

situation and change the facts behind the prediction. Intelligence pushes decision-makers' ideas in one direction, their decisions affect the environment, which in turn changes the intelligence picture, and when tentativeness and reversals are factored in it becomes obvious in some cases that intelligence assessment and the policy process become, in effect, one big ball of wax.

When intelligence products are successfully kept out of this maelstrom, remaining untainted by the hurly-burly of policy debate, they are likely to preserve purity at the price of irrelevance. Almost two weeks before the U.S. incursion into Cambodia in 1970, for example, the Office of National Estimates drafted a memorandum on prospects in Indochina which concluded that denial of North Vietnamese base areas there would not cripple the Communist military effort. Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) Richard Helms did not forward the draft to the White House. According to testimony by George Carver this was because Helms had been told of the impending operation on the condition that he not inform his analysts, and considered it unwise to forward a memo drafted in ignorance of this plan. Both the White House secrecy and Helms' reticence were unfortunate; in trying to separate intelligence and policy, they damaged both. Greater frankness, exchange, and interaction would not necessarily have improved the result, but they could not have hurt.

The melding or confusion of analysis and decision, of course, can be overstated. In many or most instances the functions of intelligence estimation and policy judgment are quite clearly and easily separable in time and space. This is more often the case, though, for the comparatively clear, easy, and temporary or remote problems than for

the murky, difficult, and continuing or pressing ones. I will focus on what should be inferred from the messier tough cases. For these cases it may be a misdirected effort to ask "at what stage" intelligence should fit into the policy process, because it fits in at almost all stages--defining a problem, listing the constraints that bound the range of choices, assessing foreign reactions to those choices, and reassessing the variables as U.S. policy unfolds. Moreover, it is obvious that the best way to avoid or temper the consequences of crises is to think about them and plan well in advance, before they become full-blown. But realism about the day-to-day responsibilities of policymakers suggests this is hard to do. Thus I will also focus on the kinds of intelligence that may help in anticipating problems, rather than just in reacting to them.

Political Sensitivity, Analytical Risks, and Foresight

The notion that intelligence and policy functions are wrapped up in each other, in constant interactions difficult to untangle, has heretical implications for the orthodox tradition of theory about the proper relationship between intelligence professionals and political authorities. This conventional wisdom stressed the need to guard the objectivity of analysts by separating them from the decision process. Involvement in policy councils was thought to offer either an invitation to intellectual corruption (analysts becoming "yes-men") or an opportunity to walk the plank (honest analysts being marked or passed over for their insistent espousal of unpopular views). This norm has not always been applied stringently in practice, and many intelligence professionals--especially frustrated ones--have come to

question it. But if the careful separation of the analytical and decisional functions is impossible without sacrificing estimators' influence and turning the intelligence community into an ivory tower, how can the analyst's integrity or reputation be protected? The answer matters not only for the interests of the intelligence personnel, but for policy too. If leaders lose confidence in the objectivity of intelligence, intelligence cannot do its job of informing them.

Unhappily there are no hard and fast answers to this question. The only answer is mushy: success depends on maintaining a delicate balance between discrediting analysts as a result of their total absorption into policy debate, or isolating them and keeping them pure but unhelpful to decision-makers. How well this can be done depends very much on the personalities involved, and especially on the adeptness at bureaucratic politics of the intelligence managers (for example, the Deputy to the DCI for National Intelligence or the State Department's Director of Intelligence and Research) who can act as brokers or salesmen for their subordinates' products, and buffers against political pressure. This kind of management of intelligence-policy interaction is more a matter of art than science. It cannot succeed unless policymakers as well as managers agree on a need for the delicate balance, and agree that for an analyst who produces really useful assessments, political promiscuity is destructive but political virginity is impossible.

Most of all, success depends on the attitudes of the "consumers," the policy-level officials who use the intelligence products. If they do not understand the interdependence of analysis and decision, if they are not sensitive to the tensions, if they do not encourage close

communication between users and producers, or if they just do not think about how the intelligence process can serve them, no amount of artful management or mechanical innovation will help.

If consumers want stimulating inputs to their deliberations from intelligence they must also allow analysts first, to be wrong, and second, to be nuisances. In fact, paradoxical as it may sound, analysts should be encouraged to take these risks, as long as the consumers regard intelligence as something that lays out the range of important possibilities rather than a single best estimate, and something that should alert them far enough in advance of a problem that they have time to head it off or hedge against it.

Some of the greatest surprises are discontinuities that would not be predictable in a prudent estimate of single probability. To illustrate, American intelligence failed to warn sufficiently of the OPEC oil price rise of 1973-74. Certainly estimates should have warned that a precipitate rise was quite possible, as the 1977 Senate Intelligence Committee staff report on the case demonstrated. But if asked to give a yes-or-no prediction much in advance of the event, an estimate that definitively predicted such a move during that year would have been unwarranted. OPEC had existed since 1960, but had done nothing so drastic (though it did show some muscle in 1971) during its thirteen years. Evolution of oil import patterns should naturally have alerted observers that a big change could occur, but did not necessarily indicate that a revolution in Saudi policy (the determining factor) would occur in 1973, '74, or the immediate future. If an analyst's reputation were to hinge on a single prediction for the year, he would have been reckless to say the event would happen. If he were

to be judged, however, by how well he flagged dangerous possibilities rather than by whether he was always "right," a strong warning about a price rise in the near term would have been warranted even several years earlier.

This takes us to the second point. Before the events of 1973 U.S. decision-makers at the highest levels simply were not interested in OPEC. They were preoccupied by other insistent problems, such as the war in Vietnam, peace negotiations in Paris, SALT, CSCE, rapprochement with China, war in the Indian subcontinent, currency exchange rates, and tension between Israel and non-oil-producing Arab states. With never enough time to think or read about all the aspects of even these problems, they were not about to launch into excursions about the kind of oil crisis that only "could" happen sometime in the future, and that at any rate had never happened before. With hindsight, of course, they should have worried about it then. What they needed was a nuisance to nag them into doing so. Professional intelligence specialists who knew about the potential seriousness of the problem should have had a license to do that nagging. There should be an accepted set of flexible operating norms within the intelligence bureaucracy that makes it easy and penalty-free for analysts to lobby with top managers to have the subject injected into the agenda of a National Security Council meeting. And when there is such a meeting the analysts with expertise, rather than just their superiors at the level of Assistant Secretary, should attend. And if the problem does, in fact, fail to become real, policymakers should not feel peeved that the intelligence bureaucracy has "wasted" their time.

There are four obvious obstacles to these prescriptions:

First, some consumers, in a sense, do not want to be warned well in advance, before the issue is real. That is, some do not want to be bothered about hypothetical or potential dangers that may, after all, turn out to be problems that never happen. To take time out to worry about hypotheticals is to take time away from other present, real, and demanding questions. It is not impossible, for instance, that the principal crisis of 1990 could be something that seems quite implausible at this moment, such as conflict between Indonesia and Australia. But we can hardly blame Cyrus Vance, Harold Brown, or Zbigniew Brzezinski for not putting Iran, Afghanistan, or SALT aside to ponder detailed memoranda about Indonesia's population explosion or the status of dissident groups in Djakarta. Second, if nuisance mongering is encouraged too much, every energetic analyst will be trying to foist his pet concern on the attention of higher authorities, and the opportunity for policymakers to be warned early about major problems will be smothered in the profusion of special pleaders. (This is where managers in the intelligence bureaucracy have to exercise judgment about priorities.)

A third barrier comes from protocol and hierarchy. Attendance at highest-level meetings must be kept small to be manageable, and it is hard to justify inviting, say, a GS-14 analyst, when much higher-ranking officials are excluded. Finally, my prescription does violate the traditional norm of keeping intelligence professionals out of policy debates. In many respects this is a good norm, but my basic argument is that as a rule of thumb it is often impractical, and when practical it may still be undesirable. It may be practical for

long-range, non-crisis intelligence, where estimates can be done one month and read the next, but even in many of these cases more interchange between analysts and policymakers would improve the work of both.

Fuzzy Lines Between Facts and Judgment

Even if intelligence assessments and policy goals are consciously separated they cannot be subconsciously separated. The significance of information—which is what good analysis should uncover—depends in many ways on what our national interests in the matter are, and those interests are defined politically. What is relevant for decision-makers, and thus what should be the focus of cogent estimates, is what affects the reasonable policy choices available. As Steve Chan has written in The American Political Science Review," an intelligence system totally divorced from the thinking of the policital leadership is neither practical nor desirable....in the absence of a referent system provided by those commitments, efforts to collect and analyze information will 'drift' aimlessly." So at least at a general level estimators need to frame their evaluations in these politically bounded terms. Where consensus on the political frame of reference is absolute there is no problem, unless the consensus is based on false premises. An intelligence specialist should be allowed to challenge the empirical basis of such assumptions. Smart policymakers should recognize that despite the inconvenience this poses for smoothness in the decision process, such challenges are really in their interest because they may alert them to incipient mistakes. If policymakers are not so astutely sensitive, though, intelligence officers criticizing the assumptions

behind policy may be ignored or slapped down for overstepping their responsibilities.

The political context of intelligence assessment presents the fewest problems in those aspects of intelligence that are least controversial or purely descriptive, such as lists of different types of Soviet military hardware. But these are no longer the most demanding challenges in strategic intelligence. Simply discovering how many and which kinds of missiles, aircraft, and tanks existed in the USSR was a huge and important task in the 1950s because intelligence collection resources were very limited. With comprehensive and high-quality reconnaissance systems now in place, however, counting and listing things is only the starting point for good intelligence. Our descriptive knowledge about what forces the Russians have is now far from perfect, but still quite good. Today the bigger intelligence problems lie in figuring out (1) what capabilities they will have five or ten years in the future, and (2) what they think those forces can do for them.

Both of these questions involve a complex and politically-charged blend of judgments about technical capabilities, elite perceptions, and government intentions. Even at the easier end, good intelligence cannot stop with lists and descriptions. The wartime capabilities of weapon systems cannot automatically be deduced from their technical characteristics, but depend on the operational concepts, strategy, and tactics that would direct their use. For example, British intelligence had estimates of the German order of battle in May 1940 that were not wildly inaccurate, and the allies and the Wehrmacht were about evenly matched in hardware and manpower (if either side had an edge it was

certainly the French and British). Yet the Germans were able to overrun France in a stunning rush, because those estimates had no grasp of the nature and implications of the revolutionary blitzkrieg strategy, which massed and maneuvered the limited German armored forces and coordinated them with air support in a novel and devastating way.

American intelligence on Soviet capabilities today is certainly much better than allied intelligence in 1940. But the stakes are higher too. And there is still much we do not know and, I would venture a guess, much that some U.S. leaders do not know that we do not know. Strategic debate takes place amidst masses of graphs, charts, and print-outs, in a deceptive atmosphere of precise knowledge about the capabilities of nuclear forces--an atmosphere that is fed by the great quantity of data available from sophisticated intelligence collection mechanisms and highly refined computer calculations. With no experience in large-scale nuclear operations, however, or even large-scale coordinated testing of forces, we really know very little about how an attempted attack would unfold. We have only educated guesses about the timing, targets, and success of a Soviet first-strike, guesses that must fall back on assumptions about how Soviet planners see their opportunities, constraints, and alternatives.

Calculations prevalent among experts involved in strategic analysis--calculations which have been used as ammunition by both sides in the debate over ratification of the SALT II treaty--usually assumed that the Soviets would do what we think would maximize their capabilities: put MIRVs on as many of their heavy ICBMs (especially SS-18s) as possible, and replace old heavy missiles such as the SS-11 with newer ones such as the SS-17 or 19 as quickly as possible. But

the Russians have done neither as soon as they could. This apparent anomaly may not be crucial, and there are indeed logical hypotheses floating around the intelligence community to explain it. The only point I am making is that even to judge capabilities, good analysis has to take account of the adversary's intentions and strategy, and the possibility that his view of the appropriate military use of technological innovation may depart from what we see as logical. This takes intelligence into much more controversial areas, with crucial implications for U.S. policy choices, and makes it progressively harder to separate factual assessment and political judgment.

Interdependence of Policy and Assessment

Much has been made of the intelligence community's persistent underestimates throughout the 1960s of the number of ICBMs the Soviet Union would deploy. The exposé of this failure was a healthy warning, but its significance really depends on the policy preferences of the beholder. Hawks have rightly pointed out the effect of unsubstantiated assumptions about Soviet aims--that the USSR was striving in the 1960s only for minimal deterrence, or for parity--in skewing projections. It is not clear, though, that the failure in itself to project numbers deployed was quite as dangerous or egregious as some hawks maintain.

First, projecting numbers of a weapon that will be deployed can never be more than an informed guess, especially if the projections go years into the future, to a point where the adversary himself may not even have decided the number yet. The guess in this case should have been better, since ample clues were available (though their salience or determinacy is "obvious" only in hindsight), but it still would have

been a guess. Second, the critics of this set of particular estimates about numbers did not demonstrate that other estimates in this period, such as those concerning qualitative improvements in weaponry, were comparably far off the mark. Third, just because this failure concerned a crucial area of policy does not mean that the failure itself had severe consequences. It is not obvious that less mistaken estimates would necessarily have prompted substantially different American policy choices. The quantitative scale of our own ICBM investments had already been set in the early 1960s, before the full accumulation of misestimates, and there is no evidence that the ABM decision, SALT positions, or modernization programs would have been altered in a major way by more accurate projections. (The cancellation of the B-1 and slow-down of MX development, for example, were decisions made long after recognition of the mistaken estimates.)

None of this excuses the failure, but it does make its significance contingent on other judgments, such as those concerning Soviet intentions and strategic doctrine, and those related to our own conception of deterrence and military adequacy. The import of intelligence success or failure, in short, depends on U.S. policy just as the wisdom of policy also depends on intelligence. This is the crux of the strategic debate since the mid-1970s. If asymmetrical counterforce capabilities and numerical Soviet advantage in the ballistic missile elements of our triad are not in themselves a threat, the mistaken estimates of the 1960s were an embarrassing but inconsequential failure. If, on the other hand, an American posture based generally on the theory of Mutual Assured Destruction is inadequate or dangerous--and the consensus in the defense community has

indeed swung back in this direction in recent years--then the intelligence and policy failures discussed by Albert Wohlstetter and others, failures which reinforced each other, are important. How then might they have been avoided?

One way would have been to facilitate the articulation of dissent from low levels in the analytical bureaucracy. The goal of producing a single coordinated National Intelligence Estimate does not prevent this, but it does inhibit it. As long as the NIE is supposed to be produced separately from and prior to discussions in a policy forum, and negotiated among various agencies, indulging dissent poses costs--first for timeliness, or second, for cogency.

If justice is to be done to all viewpoints within a trim document, it will take longer to produce. And the production process for NIEs is already quite constipated, to the point that they may not be useful for fast-breaking problems (this was the conclusion of the 1978 post-mortem staff report of the House Select Committee on Intelligence concerning the collapse of the Shah's regime in Iran). For the strategic NIEs timeliness may not be so crucial--unless we get into a latter-day Cuban missile crisis--but here we run into the second problem. The 1976 Team B critique jolted the production process of the NIE 11/8, the central strategic estimate, into less certainty and more attention to alternative explanations of Soviet programs. The 11/8's of the past few years reportedly have grown even longer than they used to be, which was already too long and flabby for many high-level officials to take time to read.

Recognizing and Using Biases

The simple norm of tolerating or encouraging dissent is not especially helpful. It has become so widely accepted in principle that it is now a cliché before which almost all observers ritually genuflect. A related solution to avoiding the self-reinforcing ideological consensus that some critics saw as the source of error is a more radical one: to institutionalize contending biases within the analytical bureaucracy. To some extent this is already done in effect by the dispersion of analytic assets across intelligence units in different departments--such as CIA, INR, DIA, and the service intelligence agencies--where professional subcultures and predispositions tend somewhat to differ from each other. But this is an unconscious and unsystematic institutionalization of bias, and as many observers have begun to notice, pluralism in itself does not guarantee fewer mistakes. What I have in mind is a more conscious and admittedly politicized standard for personnel selection within units such as the CIA's Office of Strategic Research. Managers would purposely install several analysts with different fundamental views about the Soviet Union and the nature of arms competition, so that in arguing with each other consistently they make it harder to write and build on unsubstantiated generalizations than it would be if they were comfortably surrounded by like-minded colleagues.

This kind of personnel strategy would, to say the least, be controversial and tricky to organize. If it is not done purposely, however, bias will still be institutionalized unsystematically and by default. Some degree of bias is inevitable. Except in its primitive and rigid form, bias does not mean fanaticism or close-mindedness. It

simply means the general view of international reality, the set of assumptions that any analyst has about how the world works, the notions which form the complex of intellectual short-cuts that help him make sense out of information. Good analysts will question their own biases and revise them in the face of disconfirming evidence, but they cannot do without some set of working assumptions. Nor should they. Zealots are dangerous, but an analyst who has no predispositions at all has probably not learned or thought very much. And the most challenging issues for intelligence are those that are controversial, concerning basic uncertainties (such as Soviet aims), where biases differ. If political-intellectual biases are inevitable, they should be organized intelligently, not suppressed, ignored, and left to pop up in unrecognized ways in the estimating process. Moreover, highlighting the contention between varying biases within the estimate should make it harder for policymakers to glide over such differences of opinion in their own deliberations.

This recommendation may be as unrealistic and impractical as the orthodox separation of intelligence and policy that I am criticizing. Even if officials agreed with the idea in principle--which is doubtful--there would probably be endless disagreements about how to implement it, and debilitating recriminations about whatever results followed. But the notion is worth exploring at least as much as solutions from bureaucratic reorganization, which is the more usual--and in the last several years, absolutely chronic--response to dissatisfaction with the intelligence system. Although the recent managers of the intelligence community evidently disagree, it is probable that we have reached the point of diminishing returns in

finding new organizational and politically neutral fixes for what in many ways are old and politically-charged intellectual problems.

To an extent that is not fully appreciated outside the executive branch, the decision-making system has already adapted to and promoted the integration of intelligence and policy judgments, but the implications of this development have not been officially blessed by explicit changes in priorities in the intelligence process. Especially since the beginning of the Nixon Administration the traditional principal products of the analytical bureaucracy--the NIEs--have become less important to consumers at the highest levels. In some respects they have been supplanted by an elision of analysis and policy alternatives in the interagency studies known as National Security Study Memorandums (NSSMs) under Presidents Nixon and Ford, and Presidential Review Memorandums (PRMs) under President Carter. These studies are produced by committees with participants from both the intelligence community and the policy bureaus of the State, Defense, Commerce, Treasury, and Energy Departments, and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and National Security Council Staff. Intelligence assessments and policy options are considered together in the same document, which is then discussed by principals at the NSC level. There is a place in the system for both these sorts of studies and the NIEs which retain the traditional divorce between estimation and policy options. But the higher profile of PRMs in practice suggests that, at least implicitly, Presidents and their top lieutenants find it more useful to see the two elements addressed together.

Acceptance, Rejection, and Blame

Just as it is hard to separate intelligence and policy processes, it is hard to apportion blame when something goes wrong. When an unpleasant surprise hits a policymaker in the face, it is natural for him to feel that intelligence has let him down. Sometimes, though not often, intelligence does fail abjectly; sometimes it fails because success was impossible; and sometimes the intelligence is good while the decision is bad. It is important to distinguish these cases, and to focus on the latter two of the three conditions, because half the battle in improving the contribution of intelligence to policy choice and implementation is to recognize the limits to what analysis can do. If high officials think good intelligence will offer "the answer," and make their decisions easy, they will not only fail to live up to their own responsibilities but will also fail to make the best use of the analysis.

On the most challenging issues--such as Soviet strategy, or political developments in important but volatile Third World countries--success in terms of precise prediction is usually impossible. Analysts cannot be expected to divine foreign leaders' decisions when those leaders themselves do not even yet know what they will do, or intend to hinge their decisions on what the United States government does (which is again something the Amerian analysts or officials do not know themselves). What can be expected from the analyst is a clarification of the variables in play, a highlighting of details that generalists are not aware of, a narrowing of the range of probabilities, and a series of tentative propositions about alternative developments. Even when the trends or the probable eventual

occurrences seem clear, analyses can rarely tell a President what would be most helpful to him: exactly when the generally predictable development will happen.

The revolution in Iran offers some clues. Much of the failure to anticipate the seriousness of the challenge to the Shah was avoidable. But not entirely. With hindsight it is clear that signs of the underlying conditions for the revolution abounded: an autocratic regime that substituted repression for political institutionalization, channeled and controlled social mobilization, and co-optation; rapid and uneven economic development and modernization, with its attendant dislocations and frustrations; a population and urbanization explosion; and other social and political indicators. The trouble is, this picture also characterizes a number of other societies too. Should estimates now be saying that these regimes will fall within a year or two? or ten? There are other cases where the grounds for predicting the imminent demise of a ruler were even better, yet the ruler survived. As General Shlomo Gazit, former chief of Israeli military intelligence, has noted, it seemed utterly obvious to experts twenty years ago that King Hussein of Jordan could not last, but he is still around. In these situations all a good estimate can do is note the probability of disaster, not pinpoint it.

But because such analyses are equivocal, there are situations where intelligence estimates are reasonably accurate about the odds and offer good warnings yet policymakers nevertheless feel compelled to take actions inconsistent with the warnings. They may accept the pessimism but take a plunge anyway, because of (1) what they perceive as the alternative consequences, which strike them as even worse, and

(2) their willingness to take risks, to gamble that the worst possibilities mentioned in the estimate will not come to pass. In these circumstances disaster is a policy failure, not an intelligence failure.

One example is Vietnam policy. The record of NIEs in the 1950s and 1960s looks quite good today, in that they warned cogently and consistently of the odds against success from increased American involvement and military escalation. Yet Presidents Kennedy and Johnson persevered, despite the odds, because until the late 1960s the consequences of losing appeared so bad and unacceptable that there was no alternative to pushing on and hoping for the best. Perhaps another example might be the recent hostage crisis, although at this writing only speculation and fragmentary press stories are available for making guesses about what led to the President's decision to admit the Shah to the United States. Reportedly there were ample warnings that violence would follow in Teheran, and the President himself considered the possibility of an attack on the embassy. Maybe the risk was judged necessary on the basis of preserving credibility with allies (perhaps reasoning that the spectacle of American insouciance while the Shah wasted away and died might make someone like King Khalid worry about whether the United States would stand by him in adversity). Moreover, while destructive invasion of the embassy was predictable (and, reportedly, predicted), the events that followed--government tolerance and support for prolonged occupation of the embassy and the official kidnapping of U.S. personnel--are thoroughly unprecedented in recent history, and were therefore not predictable.

To sum up, officials cannot expect intelligence warnings to be precise or unequivocal, except in the area of last-minute tactical warning. Analyses that are to be pointedly useful in policy deliberations may also sometimes be those that tread across the line into the political debate. The intelligence and policy processes can be clearly segmented only in the comparatively easy instances when there is plenty of time for leisurely policymaking, and in the rare cases where appraisals of foreign capabilities and decisions do not depend on U.S. policy initiatives and the reactions they provoke in foreign capitals. For the messy, tough issues where foreign developments are quick and their consequences immediate, and foreign decisions may be in response to the U.S. stance on the matter, trenchant estimates may have to suggest that U.S. policies are creating problems. Formally, this is usually verboten. Practically, decision-makers may find it in their best interests to let professional intelligence analysts needle them this way.